

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Presently Amended) A guide wire structure for facilitating the positioning of ~~an~~ the distal end a surgical device in the gastrointestinal tract of a patient, ~~the~~ the guide wire comprising a continuous, unitary wire comprising a flexible elongate first segment, a flexible elongate second segment, and a flexible third segment disposed intermediate the first and second segments, ~~wherein the third segment functions as a hinge and is positioned distally relative the first and second segments,~~ the third segment having a bending moment of inertia less than a bending moment of inertia of the first segment and less than a bending moment of inertia of the second segment; the first and second segments being slideably received by a channel associated with an endoscope having a distal end; the third segment functioning as an hinge to bend between an elastically bent position when the segments are positioned in the channel such that the third segment is positioned distally relative the first and second segments, and an opened position wherein one of the first or second segment, and third segments is positioned distally relative the third segment to define defining a loop positioned distally beyond the distal end of the endoscope; the first and second segments are independently slideable relative the ~~endoscope~~ channel to selectively vary the loop geometry.
2. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the third segment has a cross-sectional area less than the cross sectional areas of the first segment and the second segment.
3. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein at least one of the first, second, and third segments have circular cross sections.
4. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein at least one of the first, second and third segments have non-circular cross-sections.
5. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the wire is formed of Nitinol.

6. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 further comprising an indicator associated with at least one of the segments for differentiating the segments.
7. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 7 wherein the indicator comprises a visual indicator.
8. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 7 wherein the indicator comprises a marking associated with at least one of the segments.
9. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 comprising a sleeve encircling at least one of the first and second segments.
10. (Original) The guide wire structure of claim 1 comprising a sleeve encircling each of the first and second segments.
11. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 comprising a sleeve encircling the first segment and a sleeve encircling the second segment, wherein the first and second sleeves are visually distinguishable.
12. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the combined length of the first segment, the second segment, and the third segment is at least about 7 feet.
13. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the combined length of the first segment, the second segment, and the third segment is between about 7 feet and about 25 feet.
14. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the combined length of the first segment, the second segment, and the third segment is at least about 20 feet.

15. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the first segment has a length of at least about 6 feet, and a generally circular cross-section having a diameter of between about 0.011 inch to about 0.035 inch.

16. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 15 wherein the third segment has a diameter of between about 0.005 inch and about 0.010 inch.

17. (Original) The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the first segment has a length of at least about 6 feet, wherein the first segment has maximum cross-sectional dimension of no more than about 0.035 inch, and wherein the third segment has a maximum cross-sectional dimension of no more than about 0.010 inch.

18. ~~(Canceled).~~ (Original) ~~The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the third segment is bent.~~

19. ~~(Canceled).~~ (Original) ~~The guide wire structure of Claim 1 wherein the third segment provides an elastic hinge.~~

20. (Presently Amended) A guide wire structure comprising:
a flexible elongate first segment of a generally constant diameter;
a flexible elongate second segment of a generally constant diameter;
a flexible third segment having a diameter less than that of the first and second segment diameters and being capable of elastically bending between a first position where the first and second segments are axially aligned and a second position where the first and second segments extend proximally from the third segment and generally parallel one another;
a tapered segment of decreasing diameter extending from the first segment to the third segment; and
a tapered segment of decreasing diameter extending from the second segment to the third segment;
the first and second segments being slideably received by a channel associated with an endoscope having a distal end; the first, second, and third segments defining a loop distally

beyond the distal end; the first and second segments are independently slideable relative the endoscope to selectively vary the loop geometry.

21-23. (Withdrawn)

24. (New) The guide wire structure of claim 20, wherein the first and second segments are received by the same channel.

25. (New) A method for using a guide wire in a flexible endoscope, the guide wire comprising a continuous wire having a flexible elongate first segment, a flexible elongate second segment, and a flexible third segment disposed intermediate the first and second segments, the third segment having a bending moment of inertia less than a bending moment of inertia of the first segment and less than a bending moment of inertia of the second segment, the flexible endoscope comprising a distal end and a working channel opening adjacent the distal end, the method comprising:

a) bending the guidewire at the third segment wherein the first and second segments are substantially parallel one another and extend proximally from the third segment;

b) positioning the bent guidewire in the working channel;

c) sliding the bent guide wire distally along the working channel such that the third segment extends distally from the working channel opening;

d) continue sliding the guide wire distally along the working channel such that portions of the first and second segments extend distally from the working channel opening; and

e) creating a loop in the portion of the guide wire that extend distally from the working channel opening by selectively sliding the first segment relative the second segment in the working channel.

26. (New) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

f) proximally sliding the second segment to pull the third segment into the working channel while leaving the first segment extending from the working channel opening as the loop.

27. (New) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

(f) selectively pulling and pushing the first and second segments in the working channel to advance the endoscope in the GI tract.